

# A Decade of *Progress*

A Status Report of  
Environmental Management at the INEEL

July 2002



Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory

[www.inel.gov/environment](http://www.inel.gov/environment)

# Manager's Message

July 2002

Dear Citizens,

A decade ago, the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory was just beginning the process of identifying and investigating environmental contamination. At that time, I was a manager for the U.S. Department of Energy's newly created environmental restoration program. Today, with a decade of changes in governors and presidents and yearly budget challenges, the INEEL has successfully completed 99 percent of its enforceable regulatory milestones. One of the three missed milestones was renegotiated and is now met.

In the 2001 fiscal year — from Oct. 1, 2000, through Sept. 30, 2001 — the INEEL achieved all of its environmental management goals with an unprecedented safety record. All of the milestones and commitments required by the INEEL Site Treatment Plan, the Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order, and the Voluntary Consent Order with the state of Idaho were completed on or ahead of schedule and always within budget.

Several large projects were completed significantly under budget. The cleanup program spent approximately \$9.4 million less than expected, and the cost of transferring Three Mile Island-II spent nuclear fuel to dry storage was \$1.5 million less than expected. This money allowed work that was scheduled for later to begin sooner.

The DOE and its regulators — the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency — continued to work together to help the INEEL improve the quality, speed and cost-effectiveness of cleanup. The best example of this was the decision to use new technology to remediate groundwater at Test Area North.

These accomplishments speak for themselves, but there is room to improve. The Bush Administration and Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham asked the INEEL and other sites to review their environmental management programs from top to bottom to find ways to further accelerate cleanup and save money. Though this may seem contradictory, the goals actually support each other. When a remediation goal is reached quickly and unused facilities are eliminated, money is saved. The savings can be applied to accelerating cleanup, which results in further savings, even better solutions, and reduced risks to people and the environment.

As Congress and the Bush Administration work on determining how DOE will achieve quicker cleanup while reducing costs and risks, we will continue our environmental management work at the INEEL. The DOE-Idaho Operations Office and the INEEL will continue to ask you — the public — how you think we can best accomplish this while reducing potential risks to human health and the environment.

Jerry Lyle  
Assistant Manager for Environmental Management  
DOE-Idaho Operations Office

# A Long way Down the Road



Remediation at the CFA  
Transformer Yard

Transuranic waste  
shipment to WIPP



## One Decade Later

Ten years ago, on Dec. 9, 1991, the U.S. Department of Energy, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency signed the Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order. It launched the cleanup portion of the INEEL's Environmental Management program — establishing remediation schedules and defining how to conduct cleanup investigations.

Today, more than a decade later, the INEEL has completed 85 percent of its environmental remediation decisions and has cleaned up more than 70 percent of the sites identified as potentially contaminated.

## Four Remediation Decisions Remain

Only four of 26 decisions about how to remediate contaminated areas remain:

- **Areas outside facility boundaries and Experimental Breeder Reactor-I/Boiling Water Reactor Experiment.** The agencies are currently addressing public comments

and should reach a final decision in 2002.

- **Remediation of the Subsurface Disposal Area at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex.** Remediation alternatives will be presented to the public by 2005. After the public has had an opportunity to share their views, the agencies will select an alternative. This process is scheduled to be completed by 2007.
- **Sitewide groundwater and Snake River Plain Aquifer contamination.** A decision will be made after a remedial alternative is selected for the Subsurface Disposal Area.
- **Soil contamination at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center tank farm.** A decision is scheduled to be made by 2010. The INEEL is taking numerous interim steps to limit the spread of contamination and reduce risks to workers.

Though the most challenging decisions remain, the INEEL is committed to turning past decisions into remedial actions while protecting worker and public safety.

## Waste Volume is Reduced

The INEEL's Environmental Management program also manages historic waste and newly generated waste that by law must be treated and disposed of as it is generated.

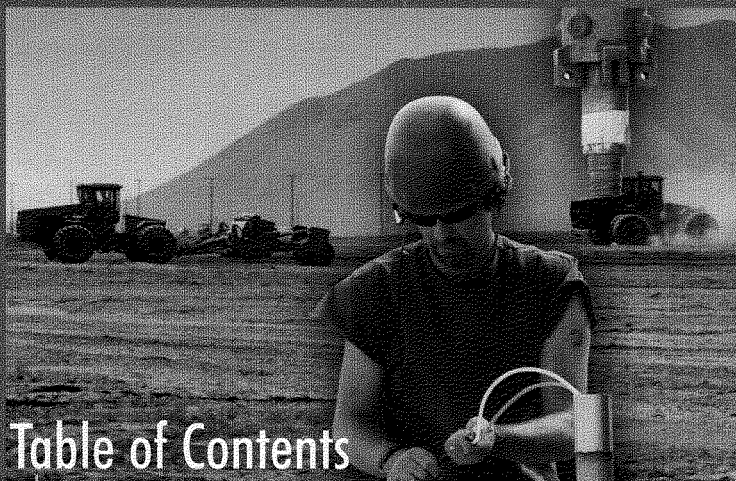
With the opening of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico, the INEEL is moving the transuranic waste it has stored for more than three decades out of the state.

The INEEL's inventory of liquid high-level waste stored at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center tank farm is at its lowest level since 1958.

## Spent Nuclear Fuel Managed Wisely

Until a permanent disposal facility becomes available, the INEEL will continue managing spent nuclear fuel so it is stored safely. It is moving its inventory from older wet storage facilities to modern dry storage. The first step to achieving this was met in FY 2001 when 82 metric tonnes of heavy metal of Three Mile Island-II spent nuclear fuel and core debris was moved into dry storage. This accomplishment met an Idaho Settlement Agreement milestone ahead of schedule.

# Getting the Work Done



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# History of Cleanup at the INEEL

• Remedial Action Completed

